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The JOLLY OLD SHADOW MAN

Gertrude Alice Kay







The JOLLY OLD SHADOW MAN



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*and particularly to those who find it hard
to make their little tempers behave —
but DO*

The JOLLY OLD SHADOW MAN



Written and Illustrated by
GERTRUDE ALICE KAY



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The JOLLY OLD SHADOW MAN

The Boy was in bed. He didn't like being there, but he couldn't help it. His Grandmother had led him up the winding stairway and into the big guest chamber long before the little hand of the clock had got around to eight. Even now, though it seemed he'd been in bed for ages, he could see narrow bars of light shining through the shutters, so he knew it was still much too early for such a big Boy to have gone to bed.

Still, the Boy knew that in one way he belonged there. He really hadn't deserved to sit up that evening. You see, he was visiting at his Grandmother's big house while his father and mother were away on a long journey. And he really hadn't behaved as he knew they'd have liked to have him. Maybe if his Father and Mother had been at home he wouldn't have acted as he had acted all day long.

On the way upstairs his Grandmother had told him that she wanted him to think of everything he'd done that day. He had done a good many things, of course, but he knew which things Grandmother wanted him to think of. He knew she meant the way he'd scolded about the suit she'd put on him that morning, and of how discontented and ungrateful he'd been at table,





and of how he'd annoyed the cook and finally stuck out his tongue at her, oh! so rudely. Oh, yes, he knew what Father would have said about him—that he hadn't acted as a gentleman should!

The Boy didn't want to think about these

things, but he had to. He was all alone, with nothing to interest or entertain him. Grandmother had gone downstairs, and he had only the candle on the little table near the bed for company. The candle burned brightly, so he could see all about the room, and by and by, as he twisted and turned—it's not pleasant, you know, to be alone with a guilty conscience!—he saw a strange shadow on the wall.

The shadow looked like the shadow of a little old man with a high hat and a hump on his back. It looked very real, and the Boy looked at it for a long time.

“Go away!” he said, at last. “Go away this minute!”

“I can't!” said The Jolly Old Shadow-Man. “You won't let me.”

"I'm not keeping you," said the Boy, as angrily as anything. "I want you to go away!"

"But you *are* keeping me," The Jolly Old Shadow-Man answered, "for as long as you leave your clothes in that untidy pile on the chair over there, with the candle-light behind it, I'm bound to be this shadow on the wall."

Sure enough, that was how it had happened. The Boy could see it himself—one sleeve, standing up queerly, was the hat, his shirt collar made the sharp nose and chin, something else made the hump on the back, and so on.

But it vexed him, just the same, to have the old man there on the wall, so he said again, quite sharply:

"I tell you to go away, for I don't want you on my wall!"



The Jolly Old Shadow-Man laughed merrily.

“Don’t be so cross about it,” he chuckled.

“I don’t like cross folks. Indeed, I’d rather meet a big yellow tiger face to face than a Cross Person, for you can always coax a tiger to smile if you have your wits about you.”

The Boy wondered if The Jolly Old Shadow Man meant him when he spoke of cross folks. Maybe he did, for the Boy really had been cross.



Finally The Jolly Old Shadow-Man spoke again, and said: "How would you like to go on a little journey?"

"Where?" asked the Boy.

"Oh, down a Long Road," answered The Jolly Old Shadow-Man.

"How will I get there?" asked the Boy.

"Well, all you have to do is to blow out your candle, and I'll attend to the rest," said The Jolly Old Shadow-Man.

Out went the candle. All was very quiet for a long time.

Then the next thing that happened the Boy was not in bed, but standing in the middle of a Road which looked as if it might go on and on forever, over the hills and far away.

“My!” gasped the Boy in amazement, when he found himself standing in the Road. Then he looked this way and that.

“Where’s The Jolly Old Shadow-Man?” he asked aloud. No answer came from anywhere. Then he felt himself growing cross, for he didn’t think it quite fair for the Jolly Old Shadow-Man to trick him this way and desert him on this long, strange Road. He scowled and pouted as he walked along, scuffling up the dust and muttering to himself.



“What’s the matter anyway?” asked a cracky voice suddenly.

The Boy stopped. It was old Mrs. Owl, talking from where she sat on a bush by the Roadside.

“Why,” answered the Boy, “The Jolly Old Shadow-Man played a trick on me, and—”

“Oh, that’s nothing,” said old Mrs. Owl, not waiting to hear the rest of the story. “A worse trick than that was played on me. I always expected to be Sarah Swan, dressed in elegant white feathers and floating on a lily pond, and here I am, nothing but a common old owl!”

She went on whining and complaining, but the Boy just felt that he couldn’t endure her grumbling talk any longer. He put his fingers into his ears and started to run from her for he wanted to get as far away from the sound of her unpleasant voice as possible, and small wonder for nothing is as disagreeable as a grumbler.

After a while he came to a little puddle. He stopped and threw in a stone.

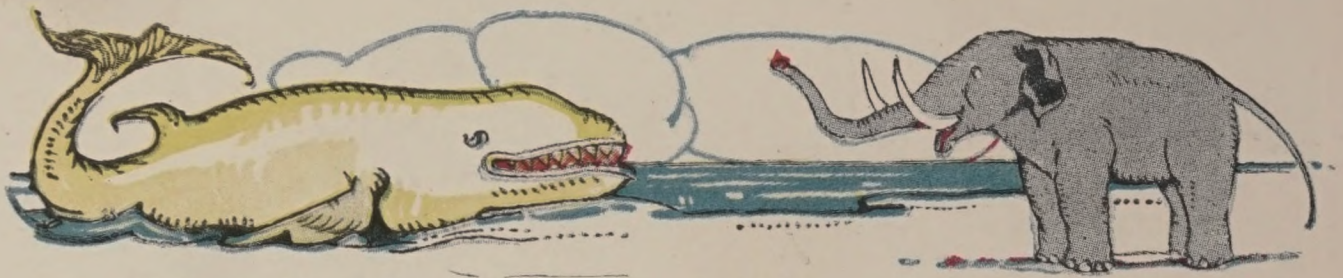


“What are you so spiteful about?” asked two funny voices at once; and there sat Freddy Frog and Tom Turtle on the edge of the puddle.

“Why,” answered the Boy, “The Jolly Old Shadow-Man played a trick on me and—”

“Oh, that’s nothing,” sneered Freddy Frog, not waiting to hear the rest of the story, “life is nothing but tricks. I intended to be an elephant, and here I am, nothing but a frog in a miserable little mud puddle.”

“It’s good enough for you,” spoke up Tom Turtle. “If I can stand it you can, for I ought to have been a whale with the broad ocean for my home instead of a puddle.”



Then Freddy Frog and Tom Turtle began to quarrel and quarrel as to whether it was worse not to be an elephant, when you wanted to be an elephant and not a frog, or not to be a whale, when you wanted to be a whale and not a turtle. They made an ugly noise and fuss about it, and were very rude and disagreeable. It was not at all nice to hear them, so again the Boy put his fingers into his ears and started to run away.

But he stopped when he spied Little Lizzie Lizard in the weeds by the roadside. As everyone knows Little Lizzie is very ugly indeed, though of course she cannot help that. The Boy gave her a rude push with his foot.



“Stop, stop!” she shrieked, “Haven’t you any manners at all? I dare say that you are a rude Boy and stick your tongue out at people.”

“My,” thought the Boy, as he hurried away, “I wonder if she knows how I treated the cook at Grandmother’s house.” He felt ashamed to think of it.

But he went on, and finally far down the Road he spied an old man with two dogs. It was Old Man Grouch and his two dogs—Snap and Snarl. Of course the Boy did not know this, so he ran very fast indeed in order to catch up with them, thinking that they might be pleasant companions.

“Good morning,” he called, in a pleasant voice. “I’m very glad to see you, for everyone else around here is cross and grumpy and—” But he never finished for Snap and Snarl began to rumble and grumble and growl, and bite at his heels and tear his clothes.





"Good morning," he called
in a pleasant voice.

“Oh, please, *please* call your dogs away,” cried the Boy.

“Huh, serves you right,” said Old Man Grouch. “You had no business to say ‘Good morning’ to us.”

“Why, was that wrong?” asked the Boy. He’d never met anybody like this before!

Old Man Grouch did not answer, only grunted, and the dogs only growled.

There was no use trying to be pleasant, for Old Man Grouch *would* not talk or laugh and the dogs were ready to bite, so the Boy started away at a run. Indeed, he never ran so fast, for he felt that he must get away from there at once.

On he ran. At last he came to a gate which opened in a hedge. A child about his own size leaned on the gate.

“Why, hello,” said the Boy, for he thought he had found a new playmate.

“Stop, stop!” bawled the Child, in an angry tone. “I don’t want you to say ‘Hello’ to me. I don’t want you to say *anything* to me. You took my little cart, I know you did!”

Whereupon ~~he~~ began to call names and make faces and throw stones at the Boy. This was a great surprise, of course, for the Boy had never seen Little Cross Patch before, and he couldn’t understand why anyone should feel that way toward him. He would have been glad to help hunt the little cart if Little Cross Patch had asked him. But now he put his fingers into his ears again, and ran on down the Road instead.

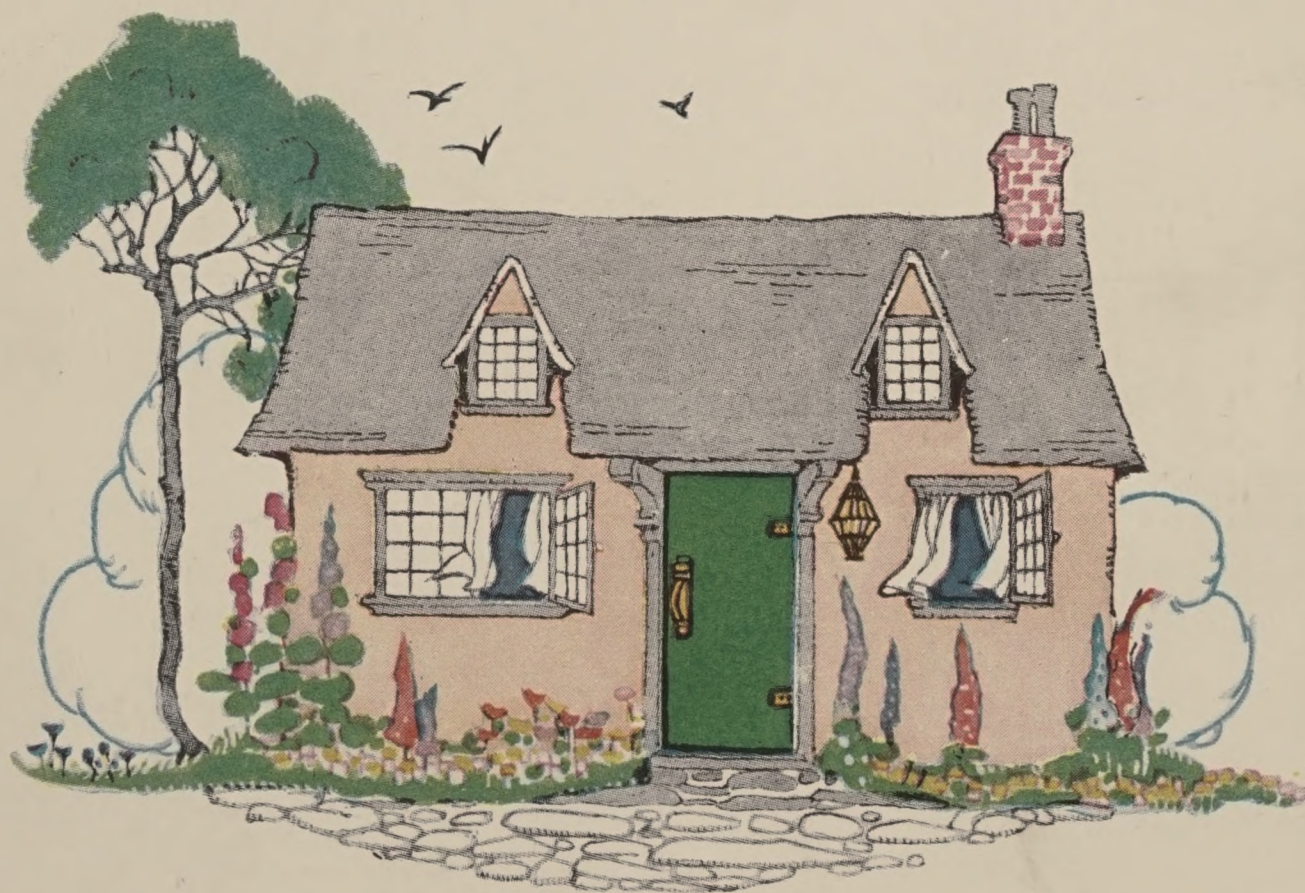
Tap-tap-tap, came a funny little sound. A bent old woman was coming. One glance and the Boy



knew that her name was Mrs. Fret. He knew it because her face was all twisted and puckered with worry-wrinkles. She beckoned to him, and when he stood close beside her she told him all about the cricks in her back, and the frog in her throat, and the mistakes that her neighbors made, and how bad the weather had been where she lived, and so on. Then, when she came to the end she went tap-tapping off down the road. My, but he was glad when she was gone.



“I want to go back to Grandmother’s house,” said the Boy to himself. He was not having a very nice time on this journey and he walked miles and miles until he came to a dear little, neat little cottage. There were pretty, fluttering white curtains in the windows and flowers grew





by the walls. A fine smell of warm cookies came out through the windows and everything seemed pleasant and cheery.

There was a cow nibbling clover in the yard—and, if you'll believe it, it was a checkered cow!

Yes, it was!

The Boy looked at the cow for a long time. Then he laughed and laughed and laughed till his sides ached.



“Are you laughing at Checkers?” asked a nice, kind voice.

The Boy looked toward the doorway, and there stood a girl with an upturned nose, red hair and many, many freckles. Then the Boy laughed again.

“Aren’t we funny?” said the Girl, smiling. “Travelers always laugh when they see us, and we’re glad to have them. It makes us happy to know we amuse them. But come in,” she added, hospitably, leading him into the dear little, neat little cottage, “come in and get acquainted. My name is Plain Jane, and this is Checkers, my cow.”

She led the Boy, who was tired and hungry, into the cottage, and urged him to eat the plateful of warm cookies which she set before him.

“Now, wouldn’t you like to hear all about us?” she asked, as the Boy tasted the cookies.

And all the boy could do was to nod his head because he was eating cookies rather fast.

“Well,” said Plain Jane, “the first thing that I can remember was when the little boys began to hoot at me and call me Plain Jane, because my face was not pretty and my hair was red. Then a good and wise woman told me that nothing mattered, if I had a kind heart and pleasant manners. I have always remembered her words and I’m happy from morning till night, and I help to make others happy. Many travelers come my way, glad of a kind word and a little rest here in my cottage.”

“And please tell about your checkered Cow, too,” said the Boy, still eating warm cookies.



“Well,” said Plain Jane, “Checkers used to be called the ‘Good Natured Cow’ before she got her fancy coat, and that was because she was so sweet tempered and always ready to do anyone a favor.”

“Maybe you don’t know it, but zebras and giraffes and leopards and speckled dogs and

striped cats all get their coats painted on them by the Painting Fairies. Well, once these Painting Fairies grew tired of always making striped and speckled coats, and said: 'let's make a checkered coat.' But none of the animals wanted a checkered coat. The Fairies insisted and were about to lose their little tempers when the Good Natured Cow, who liked to keep the peace, walked up and said they could make her a checkered coat, if they chose.



“The Fairies were delighted, and began at once with their black and white paint. Of course, when she was finished the Good Natured Cow was a strange sight. All the animals and even the Painting Fairies nearly hurt themselves laughing. But instead of this making Checkers cross it seemed to please her and she said: ‘Now I am of some use in the world if I can make people laugh.’ And so that is the strange story of my cow, the only one of her kind in the world,” Plain Jane finished proudly.

The Boy thought it was a fine story and never would he forget Plain Jane and Checkers, who always made the best of everything and were never, never cross.

And he decided that he liked red-headed girls with turned-up noses and freckles like Plain

Jane's, and as for cows—none were as handsome as Checkers!

Then Plain Jane and the Boy went out into the neat little garden and stood by the gate looking down the Long Road.

"I guess I had better go home," said the Boy, after a time, "only I don't know how."

"Oh, Checkers will know," said Plain Jane. "Checkers knows almost everything."

"Checkers," she called, pleasantly, "will you please show the little Boy how to find his way back to his Grandmother's house?"

"Certainly," said the genial Checkers. "Get on my back, and we will be there almost before you know it."

So Plain Jane lifted the Boy up and fixed him comfortably in place. Then she shook hands,



said goodbye, and begged him to come back to her little cottage again some day.

“I will, I will,” cried the Boy, and he waved his hand to her as he and Checkers went through the gate.

Down the Road They started. Checkers began to trot, then she cantered, then she galloped, then she seemed almost to fly, she went so fast.





Indeed, her speed was such that the Boy couldn't see anything clearly, though they passed by many things. And sure enough, just as she had promised him, there he was, before he knew it, back in the guest room of his Grandmother's big house.

And, of course, he was back from the journey which The Jolly Shadow-Man had tricked him into taking, and you can imagine how much better and happier he was than when he started. It's lots easier to whine and fuss and grumble oneself than to like other people who do it. The Boy did quite a little thinking before he went to sleep.

Next morning, at breakfast, he told his Grandmother all about his adventure. His Grandmother didn't say much, but the Boy knew what she must be thinking. So he told her that he didn't ever want to be even one little tiny bit like Freddy Frog or Tom Turtle or Old Man Grouch or Mrs. Fret or Little Cross Patch. But he did hope—and here his Grandmother smiled so encouragingly at him!—that some day

he could be nice and kind and jolly like Plain Jane and Checkers, who always made the best of everything and were never, never cross.





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